

Seattle Parks and Recreation  
**First Hill Urban Village Park Plan**

## **Executive Summary**

Situated on the heights just east of I-5 and overlooking downtown, the First Hill community is an integral and rapidly redeveloping part of Seattle's Center City. The Urban Center Village is bounded by Union Street on the north and Main Street on the south, Broadway and Boren on the east, and I-5 on the west. A mosaic of residential areas, growing hospital campuses and other prominent institutional activities, First Hill is expected to add an additional 1,200 households by 2024 and bring the area's total number of dwelling units to 7,220. The number of jobs in the area will grow by roughly 2,000 over the next 20 years, to a total employment base of 24,020 by year 2024.

The community's existing parks - First Hill Park, Freeway Park, and Yesler Terrace Playfield (owned and managed by Seattle Housing Authority – SHA – but scheduled by Parks) - provide 5.10 acres of open space. According to the standards in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, the current parks and open space goal for the residents of First Hill is 6.02 acres, leaving a deficit of 0.92 acres. If parks and open space are also provided for employees on First Hill, as now being proposed as part of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the current deficit increases to 3.12 acres. The open space goal for the growth in housing and employment projected by 2024 is 9.62 acres, yielding a total projected deficit of 4.52 acres.

While a considerable portion of this deficit could be considered to be offset by public open space provided on hospital campuses and the grounds of other institutions, schools, and public housing, the City will need to acquire additional public park sites to meet the parks and open space goal for First Hill. The First Hill Neighborhood Plan and the stakeholder participants in this planning effort have emphasized the need for a number of smaller spaces strategically located throughout the neighborhood and linked by convenient pedestrian routes. Safety, accessibility, variety, and maintainability are the characteristics most important to community members.

To respond to these considerations, this plan recommends a strategic concept with the following elements.

- 1. Provide several small open spaces serving the individual residential sub-areas.**  
The several small but densely populated residential areas each merit their own small park.
- 2. Enhance the network of safe, attractive pedestrian connections.** Both the Neighborhood Plan and workshop participants emphasized the need for better pedestrian connections so that residents and workers have better access to neighborhood open spaces, services, and amenities.
- 3. Integrate open space into SHA master planning for Yesler Terrace.** In its present configuration, Yesler Terrace provides a large amount of quasi-public open space; however, most of this space is not organized or improved to encourage public use. SHA has announced that it will begin to plan major redevelopment for Yesler Terrace in the near future. If and when the redevelopment occurs, there will be a tremendous opportunity to provide additional park and open space amenities to serve the neighborhood.

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- Concept Plan – First Hill Park Plan**
- Public institutions that are important community resources
  - Work with the hospitals to provide open space and improved pedestrian connections
  - Upgrade existing parks
  - Provide local open space in each sub-area connected by pedestrian networks
  - Neighborhood edges: Enhance connections to adjacent neighborhoods
  - Upgrade pedestrian routes: Consider joint project with adjacent communities
  - Key pedestrian streets newly identified in this plan
  - Streets that might act as "street parks" providing open space for adjacent new residences
  - Planned transit station
  - Light rail construction staging area
- Recommendations:**
- Make park safe and comfortable
  - Consider light rail staging sites as an opportunity for a small park or plaza
  - Create a safe & comfortable plazas on Madison St.
  - Build on the art museum activity
  - Upgrade businesses & streetscape - consider plazas as part of development
  - Connect the new community center to the other neighborhood
  - Plan for Yesler Terrace redevelopment
  - Key community wide resource
  - Make connector when redevelopment occurs
- Map Labels:** Pike & Pine, University, Madison, Marion, Columbia, Cherry, James, Jefferson, Terrace, Alder, Yesler Terrace, Yesler Way, Harbor View Medical Center, Swedish Medical Center, Seattle University, Virginia Mason Hospital, Pike & Pine, Madison, Marion, Columbia, Cherry, James, Jefferson, Terrace, Alder, Yesler Terrace, Yesler Way, Harbor View Medical Center, Swedish Medical Center, Seattle University, Virginia Mason Hospital.

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5. **Ensure that new public and private open spaces are safe, attractive, appropriate, and suitable for multiple uses.** The plan includes design guidelines to help Parks and Recreation ensure that public parks are located and designed to meet the neighborhood's objectives with respect to safety, function, and appearance. These same guidelines are recommended for use in the review of private development projects.
6. **Target park acquisition funds toward opportunities to partner with private developments, particularly in the area bounded by Madison Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, James Street, and I-5.** This area offers the most potential for new residential development and also has the most vacant and underutilized land potentially available for park acquisition.
7. **Consider LINK light rail construction staging sites for small park development.** Although Sound Transit has decided to drop the First Hill Station from the LINK light rail system at this time, the agency has committed to exploring alternative public transit service to the community – including a possible underground rail spur. Construction staging sites associated with this new service may offer attractive park development opportunities along the busy Madison Street corridor or elsewhere in the community to serve high-density residential uses and employment centers.

To implement these concepts, the following actions are recommended:

#### ***Pro Parks Levy Acquisition Project***

1. Continue and complete the acquisition of a new park site with funds available from the 2000 Neighborhood Parks, Green Spaces, Trails, and Zoo Levy (Pro Parks Levy). Continue to work with the Archdiocese and other First Hill property owners and developers to identify possible sites and partnerships. Top-priority sites to explore include:
  - The Philippine Consulate property at the southeast corner of Cherry Street and Terry Avenue.** This property was targeted for acquisition by the Pro Parks Levy. Parks has made repeated inquiries to the Philippine government and has recently received a response indicating the government is considering the disposition of the property. A park may also be considered as part of future development of the remainder of the block.
  - Property on the northwest corner of Marion Street and Terry Avenue.** If the building were removed, this rather large parcel would also be a desirable park site to serve current and future uses between Madison and James Streets.
  - Property on the northeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Columbia Street.** These two lots would provide an attractive park site in the heart of the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue residential district identified in the neighborhood plan.
  - The proposed open space in the Harborview Campus at Terrace Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue.** This could be a joint project with Harborview Hospital, securing the site as public open space for the foreseeable future.

### ***Ongoing Actions***

2. Participate in design review for new projects, and in the proposals to allow payment of a fee in lieu of residential open space and/or to require payment of park impact fees, to insure that open space provided in conjunction with new development is consistent with community needs, this plan, and the guidelines included in the appendix.
3. Work with hospitals and other institutions to provide useful public open spaces and linkages.
4. Participate with SDOT and DPD in the planning and design of street improvements, whether done as part of a coordinated program or in conjunction with an individual development project. The implementation section of this report provides guidance for this effort.

### ***Actions within the Next 2-5 Years***

5. Continue implementation of Freeway Park improvements beyond the first phase currently underway.
6. Make minor improvements to First Hill Park to increase activity and security.
7. Work with SHA to establish policies regarding Parks and Recreation participation in SHA-owned or related open space facilities. Identify opportunities and guidelines for joint park and open space development at Yesler Terrace when the complex is redeveloped. The Implementation Section (Chapter V) provides guidance regarding open space objectives and opportunities in that portion of First Hill.
8. Work with Sound Transit to explore possible parks and open space opportunities associated with future rail transit service to First Hill. Examples could include Parks acquisition of one or more construction staging sites that would be leased to Sound Transit until the transit development is complete and that would then be converted to public open space in a location with heavy pedestrian traffic.

### ***Actions in Preparation for a Parks Bond Issue or Other Major Funding Source***

9. Consider including funding for the following improvements in a future funding measure:
  - Additional development funds for the property secured with Pro Parks Levy funding (see item 1 above; the Levy also includes modest funding for initial site improvements).
  - Additional improvement funds necessary to complete proposed Freeway Park improvements beyond the initial phase of work.
  - Funds for one more open space in a portion of First Hill not served by other facilities (most likely in the “West Slope” sector).